AN

ESSAY ON DANCING.

BY

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OF THE NEW-JERSEY CONFERENCE.

Nemo fere saltat sobrius, nisi forte insanit.—CICERO.

NINTH EDITION.

NEW YORK:
NELSON & PHILLIPS.
CINCINNATI: HITCHCOCK & WALDEN.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1849, by

LANE & SCOTT,

in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the Southern District of New-York

PREFACE.

DURING the winter of 1847–8, the writer, then stationed in Belvidere, N. J., was driven, by circumstances not of his own creation, into active hostilities upon the subject of Dancing. Having had little previous acquaintance with the amusement in question, he examined the subject at some length, and delivered a discourse upon it to his congregation. By the request of the members of his church, at the time, and the concurrent advice of friends whose opinion he regards, since, the writer has been induced to lay before the public that Discourse, modified and expanded into the present Essay, in the hope that it may not be wholly useless.

This Essay claims to be little more than a "Coast Survey," of the subject

A head-land only, or a reef, is here and there pointed out, and a beacon erected. Still, the interior has been sufficiently explored to show, that in morals it is a "waste howling wilderness," whose only fruit is the apples of Sodom.

The author is constrained to admit the charge of being wholly unacquainted, *experimentally*, with his theme. But if the lovers of the pleasure-dance should be tempted to deem this a disqualification for the task of discussing the subject, they will please remember that, as far as this species of ignorance is concerned, the writer is in the honourable companionship of the gentlemen who have penned learned disquisitions upon *Capital Punishment.* It is not needful, either to dance, or to be hung, in order to be able to come to a conclusion touching the expediency of the performance.

J. T. C.

Orange, N. J., Dec. 1,1848.

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AN

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION—RELIGIOUS DANCES OF THE HEBREWS.

No human language can, in popular use, be made philosophically accurate. Those reformers of the English alphabet, who would fain cause each elementary sound to have its proper character, and, consequently, each alphabetic character to have its invariable signification, might find an ample field for their corrective genius, in so amending the language, that each *word* may invariably represent the same idea. Thus, the language would be fashioned upon sound philosophic principles. But, until this great work shall have been wrought, we are destined to experience the disadvantages of an imperfect medium of communication.

This radical defect of language renders it unavoidable for us to express, by the same word, things separated from each other by broad lines of distinction. The small boat which bore the Saviour and his disciples over the quiet surface of the little sea of Gennesareth, is, in the Scriptures, styled a ship; and the same name, in our own day, is applied to the stately vessel which spreads a swelling cloud of canvass to the winds, and sweeps, in triumph, over the ocean's wilderness of waves. The same title is given to the dim circle of rays which surrounds a glimmering taper, and to the glory which floats around the throne of the Great Jehovah; and the word which names the absurd or sinful songs of earth, is also employed to represent the melody of angel harps in the mansions of the blest.

Among the words thus applied to things widely differing in their nature, is the term DANOING.

We apply the term to the measured movements of the King of Israel, as he led the joyous procession which brought the

ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David. We apply the term, also, to the indecent, lascivious gestures of the Alméh of the East, and to the savage gesticulations of the Indian warrior, when he returns from battle, bringing a goodly store of scalps and plunder. We employ the same word, whether we speak of motions intended to express joy or sorrow, love or hatred; whether they grace a marriage, a festive procession, or a funeral; whether performed—

"By saint, by savage, or by sage."

It is obvious, therefore, that the advocates of the modern dance cannot draw any inference, favourable to the art which they admire, from the fact that holy men of old are represented as "dancing with all their might." Measured movements of the body, or dancing, like measured movements of the vocal organs, or language, cannot be judged of in the mass, but the moral character of each class of it must be determined, and its lawfulness or expediency ascertained, by considering its design and its general results. And,

as speech may be the voice of joy, of anger, or of devotion, so may the gestures of the body be made to express love or aversion, veneration or contempt.

Dancing, as connected with Religion.

The dance, or something at least to which that term, in its loose, indeterminate sense, is applied, can be traced back to very remote ages. In all nations, dancing was originally practised only in religious worship. Thus it was in Greece and Italy. Plato states that, among the Egyptians, dancing was never an amusement, but was strictly a religious ceremony; and he gives his opinion, that it never should be employed except in divine worship.

Religious ceremonials of this description, are defended by Servius, on the ground that the whole body should join in acts of adoration. Taking this view of dancing, the heathen considered it well pleasing to their many deities. And one of the old Greek poets remarks, that they who worship the gods best in the dance, are most fortunate in battle. The religious

dances of the ancients, however, were very simple, and consisted either in a measured step in procession, with certain gestures of the body, or in various turnings and windings around an altar, built in honour of the deity whose worship they celebrated.

As measured movements of the body were performed in the public religious ceremonies of the Egyptians, the children of Israel doubtless became acquainted with them during their sojourn in the "house of bondage." Being an imitative and a not very enlightened race, they were led to adopt the dance, and introduce it into the worship of Jehovah.

The first instance in which the pen of inspiration records a celebration of the kind, was when the fugitive Hebrews had passed through the parted waters of the Red Sea, and thus escaped their foes. This happy event was celebrated by a festive religious procession.

"Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and

his rider hath he thrown into the sea." "The Lord shall reign forever and ever." "And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

This dance could have been little more than a procession, indicative of sacred joy. There was a song of praise sung by the men, with Moses as their leader; and as the word "them," which, in the original, is masculine, indicates, they were answered by a chorus of women, led by Miriam the prophetess, or sacred poet, who repeated the ascriptions of praise to their Great Deliverer. The females, too, accompanied their song with the dance.

Lady Mary Wortley Montague observes, with regard to the mode of dancing in the East: "Their manner of dancing is certainly the same that Diana is said to have danced on the banks of the Eurotas. The great lady still leads the dance, and is fol-

lowed by a troop of young girls, who imitate her steps, and, if she sings, make up the chorus. The steps are varied, according to the pleasure of her that leads the dance, but always in exact time."

Now, if the pleasure-dances of our own day are to be justified by the dances of old, it is necessary that there be some common features, some resemblance, between them. But will our modern dancers pretend that their performances are in imitation of these pious rejoicings? A modern dancing-school or ball resembles this scene of gladness about in the same degree that curses resemble prayer. They are in perfect antithesis. The performers are not the same, the performances are wholly unlike, and the design is entirely dissimilar.

Our dances are performed by males and females mingled together, and arranged in pairs; that of the Hebrews was performed by a band of maidens and women alone. The modern dance is regulated by the senseless whine of a violin, while that of the Hebrews was accompanied by a noble anthem of praise unto Him who had open-

ed for them a path through the dark waters, and sent back the rolling sea upon the bands of the oppressor. The one was a solemn procession of those whom God had redeemed from death, moving in measured time and regular order, chanting to the sound of instruments of music; the other consists in unmeaning shufflings, scrapings, and twirlings, interspersed, now and then, with the affectionate clasp of a strange hand, in one description of dance, and with still more affectionate embraces in another. The design of one performance was to offer thanksgiving, with the voice of melody; the object of the other may not be the same in all, and in some be indefinable, but, in most cases, it probably is merely to show off graces, real or imaginary, and lay trains for flirtation. Therefore, we perceive that this Israelitish festival bears about the same relation to the dances of our times, that the Eucharist bears to the orgies of the inebriate. Religious processions give no countenance to the irrational caperings and curvettings of modern belles and beaux. The truth

would be better preserved, were those who would defend the modern dance, on Scripture principles, to appeal to the fact that the Israelites danced around the golden calf.

Another celebration, similar to that at the passage of the Red Sea, took place when Jephthah and his army defeated the idolatrous Ammonites. As he returned to Mizpeh, after the victory, Jephthah's daughter met him, with her companions, chanting to the sound of timbrels, and moving in measured time. In her reply to the salutation of her father, she ascribed the victory over Ammon to the special interposition of God; and from this we infer that she celebrated in song, the majesty, power, and goodness of Him who had given Israel the victory.

When Saul, the man of war, and David, the shepherd youth, returned from a victorious war with the Philistines, who had smitten and oppressed Israel, "it came to pass that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the

women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands."

And when King David brought the ark of the Lord from the house of Abinadab, at Gibeah, intending to convey it to the city of David, they instituted a joyous procession. "And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, that was in Gibeah, and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart. . . . .And David, and all the house of Israel, played before the Lord on all manner of instruments, made of fir-wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals." But though they set out with so great demonstrations of joy, an unexpected occurrence turned their joy into mourning. The ark was a sacred thing, and none but the priests might touch it. But when the motion shook the ark, Uzzah put forth his hand and took hold of it in violation of the divine command. God smote him for his act of disobedience, and he died. The songs of joy ceased,

the harps and cymbals were silent, and great fear seized upon the people. David was alarmed at the dread event, and hastily concluded that God was so exceeding jealous of the sanctity of the sacred chest, that those who bore it, or had it in their dwellings, could not be safe; therefore he turned aside, and left the consecrated deposit with Obed-edom, the Gittite.

"And it was told King David, saying, The Lord hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went, and brought up the ark of God, from the house of Obed-edom, into the city of David, with gladness." "And David danced before the Lord with all his might: and David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord, with shouting, and the sound of the trumpet."

Shall we say that these processions, though moving with measured step, to the sound of cheerful music, indicative of sacred joy, are to be likened to modern shuffling and scraping? The blindest devotee

of the pleasure-dance will not be prepared to go this length of absurdity.

It is proved, by all the facts, that the dances performed by holy men of old, were strictly religious in their nature and design, and were, in every feature, the direct reverse of those in our own times, which would fain borrow an air of respectability from Scripture history, wrested from its true import. Therefore, when the Psalmist breathes out, in song, his gratitude to the great Jehovah for blessings innumerable: when he exclaims, "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing," "O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee forever," we have not a shadow of evidence that the dancing alluded to was anything more or less than measured movements, accompanied by a hymn of praise unto the Lord of hosts, and regulated by the sound of the tabret and the harp. And if the passage in Ecclesiastes, which intimates that there is "a time to dance," is to be understood in the problematical sense that there are times when the dance is expedient, or lawful, we have no right to apply

it to any but the solemn processions, or, if the term pleases better, the sacred *dances*, occasionally performed by the Hebrews in seasons of great gladness.

If there be, then, any dances, so called, of modern times which can justly plead Scripture examples and Scripture language in their favour, they are the measured movements of the society styled Shakers; or the glad motions of those who, like the man whom Peter healed, rejoice in the Lord their Saviour, and enter into his courts, "walking and leaping, and praising God." The Scriptural "time to dance," is not when the viol is heard in the chambers of mirth, where the gay and the thoughtless are gathered; but it is when the heart bounds with love to God, and songs of grateful praise burst involuntarily from the lips.

CHAPTER II.

RELIGIOUS DANCES AMONG THE HEATHEN.

EVEN in heathen lands, as it has already been intimated, the only description of dance known to the earliest ages, was a kind of measured movement employed in the worship of their false gods. The dances of the Egyptians are declared by Plato to have been wholly of this character. The origin of this mode of honouring the gods is now hidden in fable. Theophrastus attributes the invention of dancing to a certain Andron, who once lived near Mount Etna, in Sicily. "But Eumelus carries the art many steps higher, making Jupiter the first dancing-master. He is represented figuring in that capacity in the midst of the deities of Olympus."—*English Penny Mag.*, 1st No., 1836. Lucian on the other hand, gives to the fabled goddess Rhea the honour of having invented the dance, and of having instructed her priests in Phrygia and Crete in the proper mode of performing it. The oldest poet

and the oldest historian of Greece mention dancing. In Homer, the noblest and best of his characters, from the gods down, are represented as performing in the dance.

There was a time when the most noted men of Greece thought it no discredit to take part in these things. But this was before the dance was cultivated purely for amusement, but was a part of the religious ceremonies of the day. The worship of the fabulous divinities of antiquity must necessarily, at least among the masses, have been of a very low grade. It could not have been spiritual worship. It could not have been even highly intellectual worship, for the mythology commonly received, furnished so little basis for rational belief, that the minds which were most cultivated and given to thought, charged the whole system, in secret, with folly, and rejected it as unworthy of credence. The multitude who engaged in the ceremonials of worship were rude, and exceedingly ignorant, not only upon the subject of true religion, but in general. There was nothing in the character of the gods, as described in

their fabulous histories, which could inspire truly devotional sentiments. Greece and Italy had their gods of war, love, and wine. Every passion of fallen human nature was bodied forth into a fancied divinity; and man bowed down and worshipped the personification of his own vices. The modes of worship practised in those days were moulded by the action of these various influences, which all converged towards barbarism and degradation. Prayer was unheard of; seriousness was banished, and the whole multitude gave themselves up to revelry and riotous mirth.

The first regular dances in Greece, appear to have been those performed in the worship of Bacchus, the god of drunkenness, and the fabled giver of the vine. The orgies of this tipsy divinity were so extremely agreeable to the Greeks, that they honoured him with no less than four festivals annually. As these festivals, thus celebrated, were the germs, whence have sprung both dancing and theatric representation, it may not be inexpedient for us to inquire into their nature and general

influence. Being held in honour of the fabled donor of the vine, they were characterized by the grossest intemperance, and the most unblushing debauchery. Wine was free for all, and in some places it was thought a sin to be sober. Plato states that, on these occasions, he has seen the whole population of Athens in a state of intoxication.—*De Legibus.* One part of the observances was a procession, in which both sexes took part. Men, some disguised as women, others wearing masks of wood or bark, and with only a goat-skin fastened around their loins, to imitate satyrs, their bodies stained green and red, or daubed with plaster and soot, moved through the streets, singing the exploits of the god of wine, and dancing to the sound of flutes, cymbals, and drums. The women who took part in the procession were disguised as nymphs of the woods or the waters, and bore their full share of the rude and indecent merriment. The Bacchæ, or priestesses of the god, were seized with a real or simulated frenzy. Clad in doe-skins, and bearing spears bound with the leaves

of the ivy, they ran up and down the hills, sending forth the wildest cries, and using the most uncouth and frantic gestures.* This crazy procession went to the temple of Bacchus; there a goat was sacrificed, and the chorus, or band of regular singers, standing round the *thymele*, or altar, sang the dithyrambic hymn.

Various other performances took place at these notable festivals. One was the *Ascolia*, or the game of the goat-skin. A goat was slain, and a bag made of the skin, turned wrong side out, and well oiled, and a reward was offered to the one who could dance the longest upon it without slipping down, a mishap which never failed to call forth rapturous shouts of merriment from the spectators. Another ceremony of these refined solemnities was a regular contest in drinking wine. The candidate for the prize was placed upon the goat-skin bag already described, and a large cup of wine was placed in his hands; and he that could drink the most in the

* "Tremulis ululatibus æthera complent, Pampineasque gerunt, incinctæ pellibus, hastas."—*Virgil.*

shortest time, was rewarded with a leathern bag of wine, and a garland, or, according to Ælian, a golden crown.

At a very early period, human sacrifices were offered at these festivals. There is a report that even as late as the battle of Salamis, three Persian nobles were sacrificed by Themistocles in honour of Bacchus. But this custom was very early superseded by another, in which the women who composed the procession received pieces of the flesh of the sacrifice, which they ate, warm, raw, and bloody.

These orgies and Bacchanalian mysteries were introduced into Rome, "where they were, for a time, carried on in secret, and, during the latter part of their existence, at night. The initiated, according to Livy, did not only indulge in feasting and drinking, but, when their minds were heated with wine, they indulged in the coarsest excesses and the most unnatural vices." "All modesty was set aside, and every kind of vice found here its full satisfaction." But the evil was not confined to the meetings alone. Poisoning, assassin-

ations, perjury, and crimes of all descriptions, spread in every direction from this radiating point of wickedness. At last, the senate of Rome considered the case so alarming as to justify the passage of a law prohibiting these assemblages, and inflicting imprisonment, and, in some cases, death, upon all who should be found engaged in them. Multitudes were apprehended; some were imprisoned, and others executed; some put an end to their own lives, and many fled from Rome. Thus, the rites in which the modern dance had its origin, were suppressed as immoral and ruinous to the state, by a heathen legislature, 186 years before the Christian era.

But while these ceremonies were in comparatively good repute, much thought and attention were bestowed upon them, and they began to assume some appearance of method. The term κῶμος, which was at first applied to the irregular festal procession, common in the village Bacchanalia, was appropriated to a regular band of Bacchic revellers; and the extempore gesticulations, and extempore jests,

mingled with the wild shout of *Io Bacche*, were succeeded by systematic songs and dances. But the moral character of the festival was in no wise improved by the change. The dances were of the most indecent description, and the dress and gestures of the performers were such as to brand the entire affair with infamy. So debased was this worship of Bacchus, and the dances borrowed from it, that Aristophanes, himself not by any means the most modest of men, takes great credit to himself for increasing the dress and lessening the performances of the dancers introduced in his plays.

These Bacchic revels have furnished names, in many languages, for revels of a more private character. Juvenal stigmatizes a dissolute and licentious life by applying to it the name of these orgies—

"*Qui Curios simulant, et Bacchanalia vivunt.*"

St. Paul, in writing to the Romans, warns them against certain immoralities, to which he applies a word which was the common name of a band of Bacchic singers and dancers. He exhorts them to "cast

off the works of darkness," and "walk honestly, as in the day, not in *rioting* (*Græcè*, κώμοις) and drunkenness." In his Epistle to the Galatians, he mentions *revellings*, which, in the original, is the same word (κῶμοι) before translated "rioting." St. Peter also speaks of "*revellings*," (κῶμοι,) classing them with "lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine," and "excess of riot," and intimating that they abounded in the heathen world. Hesychius explains κῶμοι to mean "shameless songs, lewd wine-suppers," and similar excesses.

In ancient times the dance was an invariable element of public worship of the gods. At first, the *chorus*, "which is the name applied to a band of singers and dancers performing in honour of some divinity," was composed of the whole population of a town or village. They met in the public place of assemblage, and offered thanksgiving to the particular god who was supposed to be the patron of their country. Thanks were rendered in the singing of hymns, which were accompanied with corresponding dances. The mu-

sic, however, was furnished by the poet or the musician alone, and the multitude merely danced, governing their movements by the hymn and the instruments. In the lapse of years, dancing became as much of an art as music; and, as the simple manners of the early ages wore away, and as vice and effeminacy gathered influence, it became a profession, the grand object of which was to afford pleasure and amusement. Still, the *chorus* long retained traces of its religious origin, and in performing in the theatre, the dancers arranged themselves round the *thymele* or altar of Bacchus.

The *Hyporchema*, or the song and dance in honour of Apollo, was performed by males and females together, and, in some of its characteristics, was similar to the worst dances of Bacchus. Juno and Venus, and several others of the fabulous deities of mythology, had their festivals, in which fitting hymns were sung and dances performed. There were also festivals originating in incidental occurrences, and the song and the dance were always present. Among the less objectionable of these was

the *Anthesphoria*, or the Procession of Flowers. The actors in this festival were females alone. Maidens, crowned with garlands of flowers, and bearing baskets of roses, moved in procession, to the music of flutes, to the temple of Anthea, and laid their fragrant gifts upon her altar.

Among the most debased of these festivals was the Roman *Floralia*, or Festival of Blossoms. This is said to have originated in the command of the Sybilline oracle, 238 years before Christ, in order to propitiate the goddess Flora, who was supposed to be the protector of the blossom. This festival, especially after it had been introduced into the towns, and had lost its primitive rural character, was characterized by drunkenness and unbounded debauchery. According to the testimony of Valerius Maximus, it was customary for the rabble, who had assembled to witness the public performances, to demand that the female dancers should perform before them, clothed only in what a wit has termed *the birth-day suit.* Similar festivals, in a more refined form, are yet common in

the south of Europe, especially in the more rural parts of Italy. These are similar to the English holiday of May-day, and are called forth more by the cheering influences of the opening spring, than by any notion of worshipping a deity, real or imaginary.

Dancing formed, and yet forms, a part of the religious ceremonies of the savage and the semi-civilized, the bond and the free. In the East, the devotees of Brama and Vishnoo perform dances in honour of their vile superstitions. Troops of dancing girls belong to every temple there, who bring great revenues to the establishment, though not by dancing alone. The degraded inhabitant of Western Africa puts a few gravel-stones into a calabash, and sings and dances around some thick bush, in which his superstitious fears tell him that an evil spirit resides. Thus it is seen that no great degree of intelligence, or refinement, or virtue, is necessary to an appreciation of the dance, but that the barbarous, the sensual, and the degraded of all nations admire it, and practise it, to at .east an equal extent with others.

CHAPTER III.

MILITARY DANCES.

War-dances, like those of religion, can be traced back into remote antiquity. War and superstition, indeed, were frequently blended, and the military dances, in many cases, partook largely of the religious element. The Corybantian dance, which is one of the most ancient, was of this mixed character. This dance was most in vogue in Crete and Phrygia. It was of a wild and exciting nature. The dancers were armed, and, in performing, struck their swords against their shields, and exhibited extravagant fury and excitement, each performer endeavouring to produce the greatest possible amount of noise and clamour. In this, the Corybantian resembled the wild and noisy dances borrowed by the English from the Moorish conquerors of Spain, and, from their origin, denominated the Morisco or Morrice dance.

Mars, the god of war, was in great repute in the early ages, and his festivals

were among the first whose institution we can trace. One of these, in Rome, was instituted by Numa Pompilius. This was the festival of the Sacred Shields. A shield was once found in the palace of Numa, and, as far as could be ascertained, no human hand had brought it there. It was concluded, therefore, that it had been sent down from Jupiter. A council of soothsayers and augurs was held over it; they declared it a sacred gift of the gods to the city of Rome, and that the Roman power would endure so long as it should be preserved. Numa ordered eleven others to be made similar to it, and gave the twelve into the care of twelve priests of Mars, who were responsible for their safety. Once a year the sacred shields were taken from the temple, on Mount Palatine, and borne through the city in solemn procession. The priests danced as they went, and sung a song in praise of Mars, keeping time by striking the shields with rods. These shields were preserved for a long time, and were regarded with much veneration. It is alleged that they sent forth

a mysterious sound, previous to a war, much on the principle, it is presumable, that the tools wherewith coffins are made, are believed, in our own day, to make a noise like sawing and planing on the night previous to their being used.

Military dances, especially in the Doric States, were held in great repute as preparatives for real service, and to them the Dorians counted themselves indebted for much of their success in battle. Hence the remark of the poet—

Οι δὲ χοροῖς κάλλιστα θεοὺς τιμῶσιν, ἄριστοι ἐν πολέμῳ.

"Those who worship the gods best in the dances are best in battle." This sentiment did not have its origin solely in the persuasion that the gods who were thus honoured, would reward their worshippers with victory. It was rather an intimation of the estimate which they placed upon discipline. These dances were the Dorian mode of training soldiers to simultaneous action, and the office of a leader in them was not equivalent to that of a modern dancing-master, but rather to that of a

drill-sergeant or fugleman. The stern Lycurgus, therefore, enjoined the dance upon the Spartans, as being necessary in a military point of view, and promotive of national strength.

In early times there were various descriptions of these military dances, all having the same object, and bearing the same general character. The most noted of these was the Pyrrhic dance, which dates far back in fabulous ages, and is said to have been the invention of a certain Pyrrhicos, who gave it his own name. It was probably of Doric origin, but it soon spread into many, if not all, of the surrounding states. According to the description of Plato, it must have corresponded very nearly with the war-dances of the American aborigines. It was performed by armed men, who represented, in pantomime, the modes of attack and defence, how to assail the foe, and how, by agile movements of the body, to elude the missiles and weapons of those with whom they were fighting.

In the other States of Greece, the Doric

dance, in time, lost its martial character, and, in some instances, was even performed by women to entertain a company The females, however, were armed with swords and shields, and waged a mimic battle; but with the dancers there were joined other females, not armed, and clad in very scanty costume, who performed various feats of scientific tumbling, even to throwing somersets over the heads of the warlike ladies.

The Pyrrhic dance was introduced into Rome by Julius Cæsar, who added it to the public games, and caused it to be performed by children. It was very popular among the Romans, and exhibitions of it were frequently given by the Emperors Nero, Caligula, and Adrian. According to Athenæus, the Pyrrhic dance was performed in his day in Sparta, by boys of fifteen. This was in the third century. A martial dance, much of the character of the Pyrrhic, is said to be practised in the present day in Albania, and also in the Island of Candia.

Another kind of mimetic dance was pe-

culiar to the Ænianians and Magnetes. One man personified the husbandman, cultivating his fields in troublous times. He comes with his plough and yoke of oxen, but also brings his sword. He begins his labour, looking warily round as he ploughs. Soon the foe makes his appearance, grasping his weapons, and casting longing glances at the goodly cattle. The husbandman snatches up his sword and makes battle in defence of his oxen; and the robber binds the husbandman and seizes the cattle, or the husbandman succeeds in beating off the robber, according to the fancy of the performers. All these movements, however, were performed in regular time, and were governed by the music of a flute.

The Indian tribes of our own land have their war-dances, which they invariably perform before entering upon a hostile expedition of any importance. These dances are not a mere amusement, but seem to be the savage mode of gathering recruits, where no chief possesses, as did Napoleon, the power of levying forces by an arbitrary conscription. Where a part of a tribe are

resolved on war, the remainder may be indifferent. A dance is therefore held by the war party, in hope of thus inflaming the martial spirit of the neutrals, and drawing them into active measures.

We, in civilized nations, have devices of the same nature, and full as honourable. Recruiting officers of the most plausible manners, are sent into the large towns, their faces beaming with smiles, and their persons glittering in uniform. The banner of the Union floats over their abode: ever and anon, the stirring sounds of martial music are heard there; and those of the recruits already enlisted, who are least likely to run away, are seen reclining about the door of the rendezvous, clothed in very blue coats, and girded with very white belts, and apparently in the enjoyment of great peace of mind. And it is only when mustered into actual service, that the dreaming soldier wakes to all the bliss of hard fare, stern discipline, toilsome marches, battles, wounds, and death.

The Indian warriors have not the means of garnishing the work of slaughter with

all this glory and tinsel. They appeal directly to the brutal passions of the savage. The advocates of the proposed war gather a band and perform a mimic battle. They represent, in speaking gestures, the ambush, the attack, the pursuit of the flying foe, and the slaughter of the wounded. Thus they seek to inflame the fierce passions of destruction, and add to their own strength for the contemplated expedition. When they return from a successful foray, they dance again, giving, in pantomime, a history of the scenes through which they have passed in their absence. The exulting warrior shows how the enemy were asleep in their cabins; how he stealthily crept upon them in the still hour of midnight; how the victims started from their slumbers in wild dismay, as he and his band rushed upon them, sounding the panther-like yell of assault; how he himself overtook one, or two, or three, of the helpless fugitives; how he buried his tomahawk in their shattered brains; how he glanced his sharp knife around their heads, and tore away the scalps which now dan-

gle from his hand, "dabbled all with blood."

These dances vary, in some degree, among the different tribes; but in all essential features, the weapons, the paint to represent blood, and the mimic fray, they are the same. Several tribes, perhaps most of the less civilized ones, have their war-dances also in times of peace, as we have our volunteer and militia parades, to keep up the martial spirit. Among the Mandans, the males are divided into classes of varying degrees of dignity, and named "Buffaloes," "Dogs," &c. In the war-dances, each class has its appropriate dress, paints, feathers, and weapons. When they are engaged in war, and a band of warriors come home from a successful expedition, they enter the village performing the "scalp-dance," and repeat the ceremony four evenings in succession. In this dance, they represent the events of a battle, the advance and the retreat, the rally, and the deadly fight; and while the warriors are performing these mimic feats their amiable spouses join in the ovation,

bearing on long rods the scalps taken from the slain.

War-dances, much like these, are now practised among the Arabs of Arabia Petræa. They are thus described by a modern traveller,* as witnessed by him near the Jordan :—" We had purchased a sheep for our Arab guards, and soon we found they had become quite merry on their mutton. They laughed and sung joyously. At length, before a large fire, they prepared themselves for the exhibition of one of their war-dances. A number of singers stood up in a row, singing loudly, at the same time performing various gesticulations, such as clapping their hands, and bowing themselves, at times, nearly to the ground. There was but one dancer at a time, and he performed a few feet in front, facing the singers. He held in his hand a sabre, which he continually flourished as he moved backward and forward, uttering, at times, a kind of gruff shout. They reminded me much of American Indians."

* Professor Millard, of the Theological Seminary, Meadville, Pennsylvania.

War-dances are yet found in many nations, but enough has been said to show their general design and character. There is a strong family resemblance among them. The sabre exercise of the Arab, the scalp-dance of the Mandan warrior, and the military ball of the American, are obviously the same ceremonial observances, modified by incidental circumstances. They are all suggestive of savage passions, and are equally uninspired by that Gospel whose spirit is "PEACE ON EARTH, GOOD-WILL TO MEN."

CHAPTER IV.

DANCES OF PLEASURE AND AMUSEMENT.

"THE old Greeks had religious dances, and war-dances; dances for marriages, for funerals, and for a great variety of occasions." This fact shows that they were, at that time, a rude and ignorant people, generally; or, at all events, that their notions of propriety were very different from ours.

Dancing is now defended on the ground of its being the natural language of joyous emotion. But the ancient Greeks, like the degraded modern Egyptians, danced at funerals.* We have seen the dance used as an expression of joy and gratitude by Hebrew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian; and we find it everywhere losing its devotional aspect, its air of sober reality, and assuming the features of mirth and jollity. In Egypt, indeed, if Plato be correct, it maintained its dignified character, and never descended from its elevated position as an element of religious worship. But it is evident, even in the brief sketch of the dances of old given in the preceding pages, that, among the nations generally, it soon lost its sacred character. The idea of worship was merged in that of pleasure and amusement. It is obvious, that while the ostensible object of the dance was to honour the gods, the real design with the multitude, in many if not most cases, could not have been anything but the pleasurable excitement of the moment.

* Vide Dr. Olin's Travels, vol. i, p. 214.

The first time in which the dance of amusement appears to be alluded to in the Scriptures, is, when the king of Israel brought the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David. On that occasion the Hebrew monarch was at the head of the joyful procession, and "danced before the Lord with all his might." His queen looked out of the palace window, as the procession entered the city, and seeing her royal husband thus employed, she "despised him in her heart." David offered his burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and "blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts." After his pious oblations, expressive of sacred joy, were ended, the king "returned to bless his house." But, to his great astonishment, his royal consort received him with false accusations and cutting reproaches. "How glorious was the king of Israel to-day, who uncovered himself to-day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!" It is evident that the sting of these reproaches is the allusion to the practices of

certain ones who were not had in reputation. She probably referred to professional dancers, whom she designates, doubtless very appropriately, as "vain fellows," destitute of all shame. The king felt that the charge was unkind and unjust, to the last degree. He pointed out the difference between a common dance and his movements in the solemn procession. His measured step, he said, was "before the Lord, who had chosen him to be ruler" of his people. He declared he would "play before the Lord," knowing that it had scarce a feature in common with the dances of the "vain fellows" whom Michal held in such unqualified contempt. But she appears to have rejected all explanations; and the result was, an alienation of affection which lasted as long as life itself.

Dancing for purposes of pleasure and diversion is alluded to also by Job. He speaks of the hardened wicked, who "said unto God, What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?" And yet they enjoy temporal prosperity, and spend their little

hour in worldly pleasures. "Their children dance; they take the timbrel and the harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in mirth, and in a moment go down to the grave."

The dance of amusement was performed in the court of Herod Antipas, in the days of John the Baptist. Herod was one of the worst of men—licentious, cruel, and cowardly. He was married to the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia Petræa; but, falling into a criminal passion for Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, he drove his queen from the palace, and persuaded Herodias to abandon her lawful husband and become his paramour. John the Baptist denounced this shameless crime in no measured terms, and that, too, to the very face of the king. John was no "reed shaken with the wind." He was no dwarfish, slender thing, which stood upright when the "south wind blew softly," but bent before the rude blasts of the north. He was rather an "oak of Bashan," a cedar in Lebanon, which might be broken by the tempest, but could not be made, like the

pliant bulrush, to bow low before its fury, that it might rise again when the storm was over.

Herod was stung to the heart by the powerful reproofs of this fearless denouncer of sin, and, as sinners in such cases often do, resorted to violence. He was instigated to this by the revengeful Herodias, who, enraged by John's denunciations, "had a quarrel with him, and would have killed him, but could not." Herod feared John, "knowing that he was a just man and a holy," and therefore he dared not give way to her importunities. But, on Herod's birthday, Salome, the daughter of Herodias, danced before Herod, as he sat at the banquet.* Her dancing pleased the king so well that he promised, with an oath, to give her whatever she might

* The Anglo-Saxon translation of the Gospels interprets ὠρχῆσατο by the word *tumbled*; thus ungallantly putting the young lady on a level with a common clown. One of the pictorial manuscript Bibles of the 12th century figures her ungracefully balancing herself upon her head, with her feet in the air. The probability is, that there was no vast amount of the "poetry of motion" in any of the dances of antiquity.

ask, to the half of his kingdom. And she, being already instructed by her infamous mother, asked the head of John the Baptist. Herod "was exceeding sorry;" and now, perhaps, saw the trap laid for him. But he had committed himself, in the presence of his lords and high captains, and, like a modern duellist, he considered his *honour* implicated. The malice of the mother was gratified. Soon the bloody head of the murdered John was brought in to her, borne in the delicate hands of her daughter, the amiable young lady who was such a proficient in the elegant art of dancing, the accomplishment which so refines the soul and softens the heart. And St. Jerome states, that when Herodias received the head, she took it in her hands, drew out the lifeless tongue, and thrust a bodkin through it. Look at the whole transaction. An adulterous mother sends her miserable daughter to obtain of a drunken king the head of a holy man, an ambassador of God; and the means upon which they rely for the success of their murderous scheme is dancing. Truly, in this case,

the least we can say of the art, is, that it is found in exceeding bad company, and in very suspicious circumstances. Some accomplishments are said to require some moral qualifications; but, in this, an outcast female can excel, and a murderer and a debauchee can enjoy its charms, even when deep in his cups.*

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, music and dancing are mentioned, but so briefly, that we cannot with certainty determine to what kind allusion is made. Could it be demonstrated that it was not measured movement, similar to David's solemn dance before the ark, and expressive of gratitude to God, still, no argument could be drawn from it in favour of modern pleasure-dances. The whole history is quoted merely as an illustration;

* Herod was not so wise as was the Persian Prince: "Shah Abbas, being one day intoxicated in his palace, gave to a woman who danced to his satisfaction, the fairest *Ithan* in all Ispahan. This *Ithan* yielded in rents a great revenue to the king. The *Nazer*, the next morning, told him that it was unjustifiable prodigality. So the king gave her instead a hundred *tomans*, with which she was compelled to be content."—*Thevenot's Persia.*

and it can be argued as logically, that it recommends sandals instead of shoes, as that it commends the dance of mere amusement. The parable of the unjust Judge does not commend injustice in a judge or any other man.

Certain hints and allusions in Scripture history, seem to intimate that professional dancers were not unknown to the Hebrews. David's queen offends him, apparently, by comparing him with them. And Barzillai, the Gileadite, appears to allude to them, when he declines the king's proffer of a place at court, assigning as a reason his great age, and the decay of his powers, saying that he can now "hear no more the voice of singing men and singing women," nor taste what he eats or drinks. There were professional singers, both male and female, employed in the religious services of the Hebrews; and it is stated by Nehemiah, that of those who returned from the Babylonish captivity, there were "two hundred and forty and five singing men and singing women," one hundred and forty-eight of whom were

the "children of Asaph." But these were the performers of sacred music, who chanted the Psalms of David; and, also, as it appears from a passage in 2 Chronicles xxxv, 25, wove into song the deeds and fortunes of their kings, and thus kept the people acquainted with their national history. And Barzillai is speaking of those things which pertain to the pleasures of earth. He affirms that his senses have lost their power to please, and that earth to him has lost its charms. He therefore desires to be left in retirement, that he may "die in his own city, and be buried by the graves of his father and of his mother." The dancers of those days always sang while they performed. Some have asserted directly, that the Hebrews borrowed from the nations farther to the east, the custom of training dancing girls, solely for the profession; but the Scripture evidence for this is merely inferential.

In the primitive ages of Greece, music and dancing were of the simplest character, and the whole multitude could join in them with little or no previous instruction. But as luxury began to make its an-

proaches, and to steal away the simplicity of ancient manners, both music and the dance began to assume a more complicated, artificial form. As they grew into arts, they became professions, to which persons, especially females, were trained from their youth. The profession of a public dancer was looked upon as low and disgraceful. Among the Greeks, the female dancers were invariably *Hetæræ*, or those wretched females who made merchandise of their persons. Many of them were slaves; others were those who had been left unprotected in their childhood, and had been lured, or, by fraud and violence, brought into the power of panderers to vice.

These unfortunate children were educated much more carefully than were the daughters of virtuous citizens, in order that their company might be more attractive. While others were almost wholly uncultivated, and their company insipid, the hetæræ were able to charm the intellect by rational converse, and the senses by notes of melody and the graceful attitudes of the dance. Some of them were noted for as-

tonishing genius, and became deeply versed in the learning of the age. Lastheneia, a native of Arcadia, went in disguise to hear the lectures of Plato, and enrolled herself among his disciples. Aspasia became so great a proficient in philosophy and general knowledge, that even Socrates and Pericles are said to have listened with deference to her teachings. But all these charms were laid upon the altar of crime and death; Satan was but assuming the garb of an angel of light.

The hetæræ were divided into various classes. Some belonged to the heathen temples, and called themselves by the euphonious name of ἱερόδουλοι, "servants of the temple," or "holy attendants." The temple of Aphrodite, at Corinth, possessed, according to Strabo, one thousand of these devotees. Others were voluntary victims of vice, and others, still, were slaves, compelled to this mode of life by their proprietors.

These singing and dancing ladies were one of the grand sources relied upon by the wealthy to furnish entertainment for

the guests, at their dinners, feasts, and wine-suppers. This was the case in both Greece and Italy. That we may form some idea of the dissoluteness of manners in those days, let us, for a moment, contemplate a *symposium*, or wine-party. Hesychius, as we have already seen, explains the κῶμοι, ("riotings," "revellings,") which St. Paul reprobates in such strong terms, to be πορνικα συμπωσια, *lewd symposia*, which were wine-suppers, at which it was customary to introduce the professional dancing girls. Among the Romans, these drinking parties were denominated *comissationes*, which term is derived from κῶμος, the very word which Paul employs. The drinking *succeeded* the gormandizing part of the performance, but was a revel in itself, so that it was not uncommon for persons to dine at one place and join in the wine-bibbing at another. To the Roman voluptuary, these dinners and wine-drinkings were very serious affairs. On receiving an invitation to attend one, he prepared himself by taking an emetic, to make all possible room for the coming good things,

and after acting the glutton till unable to swallow more, he returned home, and instead of lying torpid, like an anaconda, till his voracious meal was digested, he took another emetic, lest his debauch should kill him at once, or for fear that without it he might not be in a condition to accept the next invitation of the same kind. At these elegant, refined entertainments, we find dancing present as one of the indispensables. The guests reclined on their couches, draining immense cups of wine, while the performers, in costume of exceeding brevity and scantiness, went through their round of lascivious gestures before them. "Plato, indeed, decidedly objects to their presence, and maintains that it is only men incapable of amusing themselves by rational conversation, that will have recourse to such means of enjoyment; but this says nothing against the general practice; and Xenophon, in his Symposium, represents Socrates mightily pleased with the mimetic dancing, and other feats performed on that occasion. The female dancers, and the players on the flute and

the cithara, were frequently introduced at the symposia of young men for another purpose, and were often actually ἑταῖραι, as we see clearly represented on many an ancient vases."—*Anthon's Smith*, p. 939.

In the East, the same class of dancing girls are, at the present day, to be found, corresponding with great exactness to those of Greece and Italy. Among the Hindoos, the custom of educating females for the profession, has obtained from the remotest ages. It is conjectured by some, that the custom originated here, and spread westward among the nations of Palestine, Phrygia, and thence to Southern Europe. The Hindoo dancing girls, as were the Grecian, are better educated than the daughters of reputable parents, in order that their conversation may be more sprightly and engaging. They are denominated *Alméh*, a term expressive of superior cultivation. They are employed to sing, play upon instruments, and dance, at marriages and festivals of various descriptions, and even at funerals. Their dances are performed in loose, thin, flowing robes, and

are of the most voluptuous description. The music is supplied by flutes, castanets, tambours, and cymbals.

The Alméh, like the Greek hetæræ, are divided into several classes. Some, like *ἀι ἱεροδουλοι*, the "sacred servants," belong to the temples of the false gods. Others are the fashionable dancers, who hire themselves out to furnish entertainment at weddings and feasts; and others, still, are composed of the lowest and most degraded of the populace. The fashionable dancers are the most skilful. These are generally sprung from the *Kicolas*, or weavers, who, "from time immemorial, have been accustomed to dedicate their female offspring to the temples and the public." Of late years, the supply from this quarter has rather decreased, and the ranks of the dancers have been filled up with female slaves, purchased and trained for the purpose. These slaves commence their course of discipline very early. At the age of five or six years, they begin to learn the dance, and at eight commence music, either vocal or instrumental. The mode of

dancing is such as to require great strength and endurance in the performance, and no woman is considered capable of practising the art later than the age of twenty-five.

A modern traveller in the East,* saw, in a little village on the banks of the Nile, a dance performed by two of these professional dancing girls. "The dress of the dancers was loose and flowing, of very light materials, open at the bosom, and so adjusted as to exhibit the form and person as fully as possible. Their ankles and arms were adorned with rings, with which they kept time to the thrilling music of two rude instruments—the one, a sort of earthen drum, having a head of goat-skin; the other, a wind instrument, composed of two reeds of unequal length, one perforated with holes for the fingers, and bound together so as to enable the performer to blow upon both at the same time. The dance began with slow and measured steps; the hands are raised on high, or fall in unison with the voluptuous sentiments designed to be expressed and excited. The

* Dr. Olin's Travels in the East, vol. i, p. 132

chief part of the performance consists in a succession of attitudes, contortions, and gestures. The performers possess a perfect command over every fibre of the body. They were highly excited, I might say almost frantic, under the influence of the music, and of their own exhausting efforts. It was a wild and very striking scene. I was not sorry to have stumbled upon it, though it left a painful impression upon my feelings. The motions and attitudes of the dancers were indecent and offensive in a high degree, and we were fain to turn our backs upon an exhibition which, from its novelty, we had witnessed with a lively interest." And all this was witnessed by an admiring and excited group of some two hundred persons, of both sexes and all ages, gathered around the dancers in the street, as children in our own land crowd around a monkey and a hand-organ. The probability is, that we should not be far astray were we to take these dancing girls, and their performances, as the type of those of the ancient Greeks and the modern Hindoos.

As we have seen, the dances of the Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans, in which the people generally took part, were of a very simple, unpretending character, and were little more than regular steps in a procession. When the dance was practised for amusement merely, it was given up to professional performers. The public dances were a rude affair, and in those nations in which they yet survive, they still remain a rude, ungraceful, and, to us, unattractive amusement. They are described as such by Professor Millard, in Arabia; by Dr. Olin, in Egypt; by the Prince of Wied, among our western savages; and by Robbins, among the Moors of the Great Desert of Africa.

Among the Romans, the fondness for the dance declined. Luxury and vice are the destroyers of nations, and Rome began to nod to the fall. It carried on war vigorously abroad, but weakness and disease were in its vitals. Like some tree of the forest, its leaves were green, and, outwardly, all was sound, but decay was wasting its heart. Civil wars broke out; merciless

tyrants trampled upon the people; and they began to forget their pleasures and their amusements in their misfortunes. Christianity, the light of the nations, arose, and Paul preached the pure morals of the everlasting Gospel in the great city of vice and effeminacy. From these, and perchance other causes, dancing, as an art, declined, and, by the time of the accession of Trajan to the throne of the Cæsars, it was but little cultivated and but little regarded. And in the course of a few centuries, so far as the higher classes were concerned, it had fallen into neglect, and almost into oblivion.

For a thousand years, dancing, in the most civilized States of Europe, was not cultivated as an art, or valued as an accomplishment. In the fifteenth century it was revived in Italy, at the marriage of the Duke of Milan with a Spanish princess. The first phase which it assumed was that of a theatrical performance, in which the actors were men only. It retained this form about two centuries On the 21st of January, in the year 1681, an

entertainment was given in the frivolous, licentious court of Louis XIV. of France, in which, for the first time, female dancers were added to the performers of the other gender. The spectators were so much gratified with the novel exhibition, that females now took the lead. These dancers were selected for their beauty as well as their skill, and, like their Grecian prototypes, went through their performances clad in the scanty costume so well adapted to violent exercise in a warm climate.*

From the theatre and the opera-house, dancing was introduced into private companies, and now Paris is the grand propaganda of dancing, folly, and atheism, in all its modifications. According to the testimony of one who has attentively stu-

*This last arrangement was by no means accidental. The popularity of tho ballet depended upon it very materially. A wit was once asked what should be done to render popular a certain opera which had been convicted of dulness. He replied, with some want of ceremony, certainly, but with a directness that evinces a profound knowledge of the true philosophy of the dance,—"Do? Why, lengthen the dances and shorten the petticoats." Our modern dancers are evidently acquainted with the principle. Perhaps they have read the anecdote.

died the state of French society,* there a virtuous woman is not the rule, but the exception, and one-third of the children are of uncertain parentage. From this great city come the fripperies and fooleries of fashionable dress, though in a somewhat modified form, inasmuch as American ladies are yet too modest to wear them in all the deformity and indelicacy of the originals. From this elegant city, renowned for vice and moral pollution of every description, do troops of dancing-masters issue forth every year, and come up upon the surrounding nations as did the locusts of the Egyptian plague; and, like them, too, "devour every green thing." From the Gallic theatres and operas, too, come the professional dancing girls of our own day, the true successors of the dancing girls of Greece, and not a whit behind them in virtue. These are they who appear on the boards at our public places of amusement, and flourish about in dresses that would not have been objected to by the rabble on a Roman Flora-

* Rev. Dr. Baird.

lia.* These are they that simper as they dance, and look so languishingly, now on this side, now on that, and end with the exploit so edifying to all modest young ladies and nice young gentlemen—of twirling around on one toe, with the other foot raised to a level with the shoulder, while the galleries thunder applause, and the rotten hearts of the wretches in the pit bound with ecstasy.†

It is to be borne in mind, that in this brief sketch of the pleasure-dances of ancient and modern times, the thing has not been revealed in all its enormity. Some things which have been spoken of are of such a character, that, did not the occasion call for it, to describe them, even partially, would be bringing the mind into needless

* "Brisk music gayer scenes announces,
And in a half-dress'd *danseuse* bounces."
Lady Blessington's "Belle of a Season."

† "Would you persuade me
That a mere dancing girl, who shows herself,
Nightly, half naked on the stage for money,
And with voluptuous motions fires the blood
Of inconsiderate youth, is to be held
A model for her virtue?"
Longfellow's "Spanish Student."

and therefore improper contact with vice. Let it, then, be understood, that what has, in the foregoing statements, been hinted at, would, if revealed in all its heights of licentiousness and depths of infamy, shock every reader, and fill him with horror and loathing. When we look at the crime, the worse than brutish vices, the loathsome filth which took common dancing into favour, and relied upon it to carry out schemes of infamy, we can account for the sentence denounced upon it by the great Roman orator:—"Nemo fere saltat sobrius, nisi forte insanit—No sober man dances, except, perchance, a madman or a fool." Alas for Cicero! he was a poor heathen, and knew no better!

Of the social pleasure-dances of our own day, no other description is necessary, than that given in a single sentence, by that good man, John Fletcher. "Follow those musical sounds, mixed with a noise of stamping, and you find a company profusely perspiring, and violently fatiguing themselves, in skipping up and down a room for a whole night, and

ridiculously turning their backs and faces to each other a hundred different ways. Would not a man of sense prefer running ten miles upon a useful errand, to this useless manner of losing his rest, heating his blood, exhausting his spirits, unfitting himself for the duties of the following day, and laying the foundation of a putrid fever or a consumption, by breathing the midnight air corrupted by clouds of dust, by the unwholesome fumes of candles, and by the more pernicious steam that issues from the bodies of many persons, who use a strong exercise in a confined place ?"

CHAPTER V.

ARGUMENTS ADVANCED IN DEFENCE OF MODERN PLEASURE-DANCES CONSIDERED.

We now come to the inquiry, whether those who have sober views of existence in this world, who believe, with the poet, that "Life is real, life is earnest;" and especially the followers of Him who was

crucified, can, with propriety, attend dancing-schools, balls, and dancing parties; and whether Christian parents ought in any wise to encourage them, either by sending their children to them, or by countenancing their attendance.

But before we proceed further, let us guard against misapprehension. Whatever may be the facts in the case, we do not enter a formal charge against all who practise dancing themselves, or apologize for it in others. We do not denounce them indiscriminately, as favouring that which they well know to be dangerous to the young, and productive of untold evil. With regard to some of the professed friends of dancing, such an accusation might be unjust. The advocates of this amusement may be divided into a number of distinct classes, who view the subject from different points of observation, and, consequently, see it in a variety of lights.

Some have always been taught that it is a perfectly harmless amusement, and that no one objects to it, save the overmuch righteous, and the sternly puritanical.

In most cases, these have never given serious thought to the subject; and, perhaps, never having witnessed dancing in its more repulsive forms, they are not disposed to condemn it in general, but rather to deem it an innocent mode of amusement.

The half-formed convictions of others are against the dance, but they discover in the art something that fascinates their minds, and gratifies their taste, or their passions. Being still, to a certain degree, under the influence of a well-instructed conscience, they endeavour to force themselves to believe that although many evils have had their origin in dancing, yet in some particular case, just now appealing to their desires, there can be no great harm in attending a dancing-school, or a dancing party, or in going to witness the performances of some noted professional dancing girl.

Some, by their position in society, are drawn often into the company of the thoughtless and the gay; but being, unfortunately, better informed and more

intellectual than the majority of their associates, they are bored most intolerably by the senseless small-talk to which they are doomed to listen, and, worst of all, in which they are compelled to join. These hail with exceeding joy any device that will enable them to put an evening to death, without those heavy drafts upon their long-suffering and patience.

Others are deeply conscious of the fact that they cannot charm away the hours by the exercise of their mental powers, and they therefore "take to their heels," literally, when their shallow reservoir of thought runs low, and the stream of conversation begins to ebb.

Others still are the gay devotees of fashion, whose thoughts by day, and dreams by night, are full of magnificent castles in the air, imaginary conquests, and hearts carried by storm. These love the dance, as the means of bringing their charms to bear upon the other sex.

The divisions and subdivisions into which we might classify the friends and apologists of dancing, are almost innumer-

able. Here is a gentleman who has had a bitter quarrel with the Ten Commandments. He terms ministers of the good news of salvation "meddling priests," and, in the plenitude of his independence, declares, with an oath, that he shall dance to his heart's content, no matter who declaims against it. There is a daughter, toward whom nature, in regard to personal beauty, has been bounteous, but, as respects intellect, rather economical; and her ambitious mother cunningly sends her to the dance, on precisely the same principle that the jockey, who has a horse to dispose of, puts him through those paces in which he will show off best. And down there is an individual, led by the sordid lust of money, who wishes to keep on good terms with the world, the flesh, and the devil. He has not the courage to condemn what he sees to be wrong, for passions, stronger than his conscience hint that, by so doing, he will offend his patrons among the advocates of dancing, and thus injure his beloved pecuniary interests.

Of these last described personages, we cannot have much hope, and if, by chance, any of them should be reading this little volume, we shall take no offence, personally, if they throw it down in a great passion at this very point.

But we shall, in charity, take it for granted that those of our readers who have been disposed to look somewhat favourably upon the dance, or have been undecided upon the subject, and therefore unprepared to condemn dancing, belong to the classes first described, and have fallen into their present position more from accident than serious deliberation. To these we would address ourselves, and not without hope of producing conviction.

Before we condemn any practice, we are bound to hear what can be said in its favour. Justice, and regard for truth, demand this, and we desire to discuss this subject with all possible candour.

The arguments and apologies for the dance of amusement are as diverse as the minds from which they emanate: 1. The belle, vain, and fond of admiration, who

values only those things which minister external grace, declares it to be an ACCOMPLISHMENT. And words of corroborative testimony fall, in soft accents, from the mustaches of her retinue of admirers.

We confess that our dull intellect is unable to discover any substantial reason why this art should be valued in this light. The term "accomplishment" is defined by Dr. Webster, "an acquirement which constitutes excellence of mind or elegance of manners."* Now, what is there in the dance that comes up to the terms of the definition? If dancing "constitutes elegance of manners," then there could be no elegance among those ignorant of it. But this is false. It would not be a very hazardous assertion to say, that the manners of those who practise the dance are in no wise improved by it. In many cases they are made worse. Many learn to ape their model, and learn, consequently, an artificial, mechanical system of manners, made up of French smirk and grimace, which

* "Accomplishment" is "ornament of mind or body." —*Addison.*

produce a luxuriant growth of absurdity, when grafted upon Anglo-Saxon calmness and reserve.

The fate of the former half of the definition is worse than that of the latter. What is there in the dance that improves the mind, or refines the sensibilities, or makes the dancers superior to what they were before they acquired the art? They have learned to perform certain unmeaning motions, regulated by the senseless squeak of a fiddle. They have learned how to lift up first one foot, then the other; now to make a scrape in this direction, now in that. They have learned the important secret how to perform certain complicated manœuvres, which have, in themselves, neither meaning nor utility. And this is the sum total of the noble art of dancing Dancing an accomplishment promotive of "excellence of mind!" The most ignorant, degraded, and barbarous of the heathen, are more fond of dancing, and better at it, in their way, than the most enlightened nations. Dancing an accomplishment! Any schoolboy can whittle a

dancer out of a pine stick, and make him perform frantically by pulling a string.

If it be an accomplishment it ought to be found in keeping with the general advancement of a people in all that pertains to civilization and refinement. But M. Lamartine, in his "Pilgrimage," asserts that the dances of the Arab maidens, which he witnessed, were exceeding graceful, and we infer that the art, which can be acquired in its perfection by the wanderers of the desert, cannot take a very high place among the elegancies of civilized life.

The "professors" of the art, too, are of such a character as may well throw suspicion upon it. A Parisian barber or *décrotteur* fails in business, or a Gallic servant is found somewhat absent-minded with regard to the distinction between his employer's property and his own, and is compelled to banish himself from *la belle France*. He comes to America, and instead of offering his services to some contractor on a railway, he invests his remaining francs in the purchase of a violin, a pair of dancing-slippers, and two false

collars, and straightway the polisher of shoes becomes the polisher of society. He proceeds to "accomplish" the sons and daughters of the untaught republicans in good manners, which, in his version, are merely a caricature of his former master's, and a perfect burlesque on all real ease and grace of deportment. And the acquisitions of those who put themselves under his tuition, are nothing but a little artificial posture-making, and certain second-hand grimaces imported "from Paris."

2. It is urged in favour of the dance, that, in the process of acquiring the art, the learner also acquires *ease and self-possession in company.*

We admit, with all readiness, that the ability to dance confers ease and grace in dancing companies. But those who rely upon it as their passport in society, are grievously at a loss in those social meetings where the company do not deem the dance necessary to enable them to survive the evening. In such cases, you will see them restless, and exceedingly distressed

for something to say or to do, wandering around among the assemblage, as disconsolate as was Noah's dove, when she flew over the wild waste of waters, and found no rest for the sole of her foot.

We will admit that attendance at a dancing-school may confer a certain kind of confidence upon the pupil, even as discipline confers a kind of mechanical courage upon the soldier. But this same confidence and ease, as far as they are desirable, can be as readily acquired without this means as with it; and, in most cases, they are attained full as soon as the individual is otherwise prepared to act his part in social gatherings. None are thus prepared until they are able to converse, at least upon ordinary topics, with some degree of intelligence. The lack of intellect cannot be compensated by all the skill of all the dancing girls, from Salome down to Mademoiselle Elsler.

A young lady who has cultivated her feet at the expense of her mental powers can never impose long upon sensible people. Her beauty and grace, where they exist, may have an attractive power, but

those who are drawn by these to her side, will soon, unless as empty-minded as herself, grow weary of her society. They may gaze with admiration for a moment, as they would gaze at the exquisite proportions of the Venus de Medici, but they will soon tire of beauty that has no soul. A young man who is desirous of fitting himself to enjoy really good society, will labour to better purpose in cultivating his nobler powers than in acquiring mere animal agility. Nothing will sooner confer ease upon him, than the consciousness that he may speak upon the topics ordinarily introduced, without exposing his ignorance and weakness. Let those, then, who are ambitious of shining in social life, endeavour to do it by the lustre of intellect, rather than attempt to shine, like a fire-fly, by the light of their extremities.

3. It is also argued, in the defence of the dance, that *the youth will not amuse themselves by rational conversation*, and that their social gatherings will be exceeding dull and wearisome, without the aid of some device of the kind.

This, by the way, is not an argument of our own invention, but it is one which is pressed, with more or less openness, by nearly all the advocates of dancing. Some will say, in plain terms, that the youth of this or that locality are really unable to spend their time agreeably, when together, in conversation alone. Others assure us that those in early life *will have* their amusements; and they will observe, with an air of great sagacity, that "young people will be young people."

There is a vein of truth, though alloyed with much error, running through these various observations. It is true, that we cannot look in the young for the wisdom and gravity of old age. It is true, that youth is fond of exciting amusements. And inasmuch as man "goes astray as soon as he is born, speaking lies," it is probable that, until the dawn of the millennial day, there will be too many who will indulge in irrational, and even ruinous pleasures; and that others will endeavour to justify them, or at least apologize for their unwise course. But our duty as immor-

tal beings, as subjects of moral government, and probationers for eternal weal or wo, is, not to inquire what will be done, but what should be done; not to lower the law to the inclinations of its subjects, but to labour to elevate them to the standard of rectitude. The whole decalogue would soon be despoiled of its beauty and excellency, if its requirements were to be pared down to the level of those who "will have" their passions gratified in their own way.

The apology for the dance, founded upon the alleged dulness of social gatherings in its absence, surely needs no elaborate confutation. The apology borders very closely upon a confession of mental imbecility in those in whose behalf it is advanced. Plato, speaking of the custom of introducing dancing girls at the entertainments of the Greeks, remarks, that none but those incapable of amusing themselves by rational conversation, will have recourse to such means of enjoyment. The sarcasm of the philosopher is just. The pleasures of the intellect are noble; they not only elevate,

but fill the soul with a fulness of joy which is never found in semi-animal recreations. And, therefore, the dance is properly the resort of mental weakness and barrenness. The southern slave, when his daily toil is intermitted, dances, not only much in the same style, but for much the same reason, that a monkey frisks and capers, to wit, the mere excess of animal life. And the devotees of the dance are, in general, the thoughtless and the gay, the votaries of fashion and frivolity. When these gather their bands, it is very probable that their barrenness of intellect will suggest something not so tiresome as conversation. They dance, as the poet's boy whistled, "for want of thought."

The argument attempted to be derived from the alleged necessity of some such mode of amusement, is, then, exceedingly degrading to those in whose behalf it is employed. Let it be understood, when a dance is proposed at a social gathering, that it is deemed a measure of sheer necessity, and we see at once the humiliating position in which it places the company.

It is a confession that the tide of thought has run out and left them aground. Consequently, to urge a person to dance becomes an insult. Stripped of all its blarney, the proposition takes this form : "Young lady, your conversation is excessively insipid, and I am weary of the vain effort to entertain you. Do let us try something in which you will be able to succeed better."

We will dismiss this wretched apology for dancing, with the single additional remark, that those young ladies and gentlemen who cannot muster sufficient intellect to enable them to spend an hour or two together, without resorting to irrational or sinful amusements, will, when they wed each other, and spend their lives almost wholly in each other's society, probably have rather a dull time of it.

CHAPTER VI.

MORE APOLOGIES FOR THE DANCE CONSIDERED.

4. Some attempt to defend dancing-schools and dancing parties, by pleading the fear, or the fact, that *those engaged in them would, were they not thus occupied, spend their time in a much worse way.*

This is but a modification of the notion already discussed, that is, that the young "will have" their pleasures, and that the only choice is between evils of various grades. But with this, where the question of morality is clear, we, as Christians or as moralists, have nothing to do. Our bounden duty is to point out the path of virtue, however strait and narrow it may be, and however few the travellers therein. The proper mode of reforming society is, not to debase the law, but to show it in its native purity, and call upon all to come up to its level. And here is the occasion that "tries men's souls." The weak spirit, the temporizer, will abandon the post which

duty assigns, and try to find some common ground where good and evil may commune together. Not so the man of sterling integrity. He maintains his position firmly, and, like the law which he honours, refuses to bate one jot or one tittle to accommodate those who love darkness rather than light. A temporizer will assure us that those who might be enticed up to a moderate elevation, will, if we place the standard too high, become disheartened, and refuse to obey. But this is false philosophy as well as miserable theology. Those who fall behind the true standard, would also fail to come up to one not quite so rigid. The Romans probably fell as far behind the defective ethics of Seneca, as a Christian community falls behind the purer morals of the law of God.

But there is no compulsory choice between the dance and evils of greater magnitude. Let the father, instead of wearing his soul threadbare in amassing wealth, or lending himself as a stepping-stone to political aspirants, devote a little of his energies to giving his children entertainment

and instruction at home. It is their due, and in neglecting it he sins against them, and against his own happiness, as well as against a higher power. Let the mother, whose conversation is pleasant, and even fascinating abroad, strive to render her company as agreeable to her children as it is to strangers. Let home be made the happy place it may be, and the tempter will in vain display his lures to draw the young from the domestic Eden. When children and youth are happy abroad, but discontented at home, it is a reproach to the parent, and a scandal on the name of a professor of the religion of Christ.

5. Marriage is the aim of all. *Dancing introduces into company; it affords the sexes facilities for forming acquaintances, and thus is promotive of matrimonial alliances.*

We are aware that this argument is not openly advanced by young ladies, and not often by young gentlemen. Nevertheless, it may not be without influence.

The dancing-school or the ball-room is, indeed, the very place to form those alli-

ances which are hit off in the old proverb, "Marry in haste, and repent at leisure." To the lover of frivolous pleasures, the dancing saloon is a charmed spot. The scene causes an elevation of the spirits, a pleasurable excitement, which not only "drives dull care away," but, in many cases, also drives away dull prudence and sober judgment. Soft music breathes its witching spell. The company, as they thrid the graceful mazes of the dance, their eyes sparkling, and their cheeks flushed with pleasure, seem less mortal and imperfect than before. And the happy swain, as he gazes upon his partner, wonders that he never, till then, appreciated her charms; and he begins to wish that he had such a being to attend all his steps. Intriguing, politic mammas understand this fact. They send their daughters to the dance, knowing that deficiencies and mental and moral imperfections are not so soon detected in the giddy, exciting whirl of amusement as in cooler moments.

But the ball-room is about the last place where a young man of sober views

of life would go to select a companion. There is much error on this and kindred subjects among young ladies, especially those who have been so unfortunate as to receive what is styled a fashionable education. Some are so deluded as to imagine that they never show to advantage except when their curls are all in artificial twist, their shoulders fashionably bare, and their whole assortment of furbelows and hardware in full blaze. Some fancy it a disgrace to be detected in any employment which would intimate the possibility of their making themselves useful. They imagine it a proof of vulgarity to be convicted of mending a garment or making a tart. They consider it highly genteel and extremely honourable to be found in full dress, at all hours of the day, reading, with tears in their soft eyes, a pathetic love-and-murder novel, or torturing an unhappy piano till its every nerve is in agony.

No man of sense would frequent a ball-room to select a wife, sooner than he would sail up the Delaware *on a whaling expedition.* If he looks in upon the dance, it

is with the same motive that he enters a menagerie. He may wander around among the fluttering mass of paint, feathers, and padding, and look upon them with as much interest, possibly, as he would look at the glossy plumes of the stuffed birds in a museum, but he would think of wedding the one almost as soon as the other. He may be amused by the graceful flight of the butterfly, but he builds his hive only for the bee. Young ladies, would you know what kind of a companion a man of sound mind prefers to all others? It is not the gay votary of fashion, nor the frivolous devotee of routs and assemblies, nor the sentimental lady who sheds oceans of tears over the unutterable woes of imaginary lovers, while the famished beggar holds out a skinny hand to her and asks a penny in vain. No; it is the young woman of rational mind, whose heart is warm and pure, and who goes on with cheerful steps to perform the duties of her station, whatever that station may be; who reads more history than romance, and gives more heed to the general intelligence of the day than to

the scandal of the hour; who knows more about Jehovah's revelation than of the "mysteries" of vice and crime; who values devotion more highly than dancing, and can be happy at home, without a regiment of flatterers of the other sex, to keep her enveloped in a cloud of incense.

To some, this may seem to be the description of a very insipid, common-place character: but it is not. In this combination of innocence with intelligence, there is a charm that reaches all. Not only does Religion approve, and Wisdom admire, but even Depravity stands abashed, and yields unwilling homage.

> "There dwelleth in the sinlessness of" such,
> "A sweet rebuke that vice may not endure;
> And thus she makes an atmosphere of truth;
> For all things in her presence grown are pure.
> She walks in light; her guardian angel flings
> A halo round her, from his radiant wings."

Young man, would you commend yourself to the modest and the intelligent of the other sex? Allow me to remark, that you will do it more certainly, and more effectually, by those virtues which constitute the good citizen, than by those

"accomplishments" which make the fine dancer. The sexes were designed to admire each other, and to love each other's society: but those whose admiration is called forth by the ability to twirl around on one toe, must be exceedingly trifling and empty minded, and their admiration more of an annoyance than an honour. Permit me also to suggest, although it may seem rather puritanical to some, that it is more creditable to be found among the regular attendants at the house of God, and the obedient hearers of his word, than among those who rebel at the strictness of his law.

6. Some apologists for the dance abandon the mere worldling's mode of defending his favourite art, and take the strong ground that the *word of God authorizes dancing, declaring that there is "a time for all things," and saying, in express terms, that there is "a time to dance."**

Even so; but what kind of dance is intended? And when does the set time to perform it come? Does the passage

* Ecclesiastes iii, 1–8

in Ecclesiastes mean more than this, that here, "under the sun," nothing is permanent; that events of widely different character succeed each other in swift succession, joy and sorrow, love and hatred, life and death, the notes of joy, and the sounds of wo? There is, indeed, in our imperfect state, and in a "world which lieth in wickedness," a time for all things, good and evil.

But if the passage quoted means that there is a time when it is allowable to dance, when is that time? Is it when the youthful lover of pleasure is "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity?" Is it when the law of God denounces eternal death to the sinner, and "hell from beneath is moved to meet him at his coming?" Is it when Love invites and Heaven pleads in vain? Is it when the guilty, already doomed to everlasting burnings, are trampling upon the precious blood of our adorable Redeemer? Or is it when the nominal Christian is so immersed in the follies and frivolities of time, that eternity is forgotten, the word of

Jehovah is neglected, prayer is abandoned, and Satan usurps the throne of God in the heart? Is it a proper time for those to frequent balls and dancing parties, who, while they dance, tread under their feet the name whereby they are called, and grind to powder the small remains of religious consistency?

Let the youthful votary of pleasure remember that there is "a time," also, for those things which come upon us without our desire or consent. Let the young man remember that his frame of solid strength will soon lose its vigour, and he, and his gay companions, become

"Poor human ruins, tottering o'er the grave."

Let the young lady, who now rejoices in the possession of beauty and grace, remember that the days come hasting on, when the bloom will depart from her cheek, and the light from her eye; when her pearly teeth shall fall from their places, and time discolour her ivory brow, and cover it with his furrowed characters; when her glossy tresses shall become gray, and her form shall wither and fade as doth

the leaf of autumn. Let her then not give the priceless hours of youth to folly, but spend them in cultivating those solid qualities of mind and heart, which will lighten the gathering gloom of the evening of life, and bloom forever in the Paradise of God.

Besides the arguments, so called, at least, which we have mentioned as the apology and defence of the dance of pleasure and amusement, there are several others of about equal soundness and force. Some urge one thing, some another, and very frequently their witness agrees not together. One person tells us that the artisan needs this relaxation after his daily toil; and another assures us that although those who lead an active life may not need it, yet the recluse and the sedentary must infallibly lose their health, without some brisk exercise of the kind.

And some, abandoning the realms of vulgar prose, rise to the dream-land of poesy. They defend dancing as being obedience to nature's kindly law, averring that the leaves dance on the trees to the

nymning of the gentle winds; and the brook dances along in its pebbly bed; that the fishes dance in the pool, the lamb in the green meadow, and the child in his sports: and thus the world is full of the dance, while Nature's soft music furnishes the strains of joy, and she smiles upon the glad motions which she has inspired. We admit the facts so poetically set forth; but demur at the inference. Reasoning from analogy is often dangerous. We might, in this sophistic style, defend the brutal gladiator fights of Nero, arguing that the inhabitants of the waters are at war among themselves; that the tenants of the forest, and the tribes of the air, rend and devour each other; that the world is full of slaughter, and therefore man was designed to delight in carnage and feast on blood.

But it may be replied that dancing is the natural expression, the native language, of innocent joy, and therefore should no more be condemned than smiles and laughter, also the natural language of pleasurable emotion. As far as this argument is

valid we admit its truth. A child receives some little gift, and he evinces his emotions of pleasure by his animated gestures; but who condemns the impulse? A man, lame from his birth, is restored in a moment, by the word of an Apostle, and he "enters into the temple walking, and leaping, and praising God," from whom the blessing comes; but no one rebukes his joy, or his mode of giving it utterance; But it would be folly to infer from all this, that it is right and wise for us to reduce to rules this mode of expressing joy, and teach it as a science. Smiles and laughter are natural modes of expressing sudden pleasurable emotion, but would this justify the attempt to elevate them to the rank of fine arts? Would this render it wise for grave men to gather together and spend hours in smiling at nothing, while one of the number stands in front of the simpering ranks, like a dancing-master, and utters the words of direction, now calling for a faint smile, now a broad grin, and then a universal roar of laughter? Would such an extremely intellectual oc-

cupation be thought worthy sensible ladies and gentlemen? The idea is perfectly ridiculous, and would draw a smile from Diogenes himself.

CHAPTER VII.

SEVERAL CONSIDERATIONS FROM WHICH IT IS INFERRED THAT COMMON DANCING IS UNWISE, INEXPEDIENT, AND, CONSEQUENTLY, SINFUL.

It is admitted, that in the motion alone, there does not appear to be any crime. In itself considered, it may be as innocent a thing to take steps in a zigzag direction as in a right line; and to toss the feet about in curves may be no worse than to cause them to describe angles of mathematical exactness. Dancing, in the abstract, may be harmless; but people do not dance in the abstract. We must consider the dance, not as we might fancy it in some imaginary Utopia, but as it is found, and must be found, if at all, in our own land. We are compelled to view it in its

various associations, and surrounded by its various influences. That which is harmless in itself, may be found in connexion with that which renders it even criminal. Firing a pistol, in itself, is an innocent thing, but in a duel, it becomes murder. *Sliding*, as practised by children, may be, in itself, a very harmless if not a very dignified amusement; but if a man, anticipating this result, glides down a sheet of ice which hangs over an abyss, and is dashed down its depths a mangled, battered corpse, the act becomes suicide.

To the pleasure-dance, then, as it has been found, and in connexion with certain things which are now inseparable from it, we have several objections which seem to us to be of no small weight, and abundantly sufficient to condemn it in the eyes of all serious people, to say nothing of Christians.

1. We object to dancing for amusement, because of the discreditable circumstances in which it has almost invariably been found.

We have seen that the religious dances

of the Hebrews have not a single feature in common with the pleasure-dances of our times. They differ as widely as the supper of the Lord and a Greek symposium. There are, indeed, dances in our own day which resemble, in some degree, those of Miriam and the children of Israel. The dances of the society called Shakers are formed professedly after the Scripture model, and governed by a religious motive. But the lover of balls will hardly be prepared to join this fraternity, and enrol himself among the disciples of mother Lee. The glad motions of the more impulsive of our southern slaves, in their religious meetings, when they leap, and sing, and shout, are somewhat of the same nature with those of David, as he came up from the house of Obed-edom. But this the lover of the dancing saloon will deride, as did Queen Michal, as the excess of fanaticism.

Could it be proved that the dancing of David before the ark on the way to Jerusalem, was, in the action, precisely similar to that taught by Gallic "professors" of

the art, this alone would not justify modern balls and dancing-schools. That which may have a good tendency when done with one motive, may tend to evil when it originates in another. For instance, prayer offered from the heart is an act of the highest devotion.

"Prayer ardent opens heaven, lets down a stream
Of glory on the consecrated hour
Of man in audience with the Deity."

But will this justify prayer offered for amusement? If it be proper in prayer to God to bow reverently and close our eyes, will this render it right and wise for a company of sensible people to spend hours in senseless imitations of these gestures, when "God is not in all their thoughts?" Surely no man in his senses will assume this position. Thus, a measured step in a religious procession may be indicative of pious joy, and, consequently, be allowable, while common dancing may be surrounded by such influences as impart a deleterious tendency, and render it sinful. We have sketched the history of dancing as an amusement, and have found it em-

ployed for the lowest, basest of purposes, by the vilest of the human kind. We have been compelled to *drag* the streams of history for the putrefied corpse of the ancient art; we have raised it for a moment to the surface, and held it up, soaked and dripping with the foulest dregs of moral pollution and fetid rottenness; we let it sink again, hoping that it will draw down with it, into the depths of oblivion, the unholy, senseless brood of gyrations, skippings, and twirlings, to which it has given life.

We have seen that the dance was employed, and is still, by the most wretched of females, as a mode of advertising their profession, and of inflaming the passions of their miserable victims. We have seen that even in heathen Rome, a woman who made any claim to modesty, scorned the common dance of amusement, and abandoned it wholly to those who had no character to lose. We have heard the opinion of the greatest orator of Rome, that no man in his senses will dance. And the conclusion to which the mind is involun-

tarily led, is, that the lewd and the sensual would not be so exceedingly fond of the dance, and employ it so incessantly, did they not find in it something peculiarly fitted for their purpose. We confess that, to our mind, the connexion in which the dance has so often been found, necessarily throws strong suspicion upon it. We wonder not that the modest condemn, and the wise avoid it.

2. But should it be declared illogical to condemn the dance because of its discreditable connexions in times past, still we are not prepared to take it into favour. We come down to modern times, and charge upon the dance, as it now exists, that it is productive of great evils. On this point, we rely not on mere theory. We appeal to the strongest of all arguments, the testimony of those who have had the light of experience. Listen to the learned and the good Dr. Adam Clarke :—

"I learned to dance. I grew passionately fond of it: would scarcely walk but in measured time, and was constantly

tripping, moving, and shuffling, in all times and places. I grew impatient of control, was fond of company, and wished to mingle more than I had ever done with young people. I also got a passion for better clothing than that which fell to my lot in life, and was discontented when I found a neighbour's son dressed better than myself. I lost the spirit of subordination; did not love work; imbibed the spirit of idleness; and, in short, drank in all the brain-sickening effluvia of pleasure. The authority of my parents was feared, indeed, but not respected, and few serious impressions could prevail in a mind imbued now with frivolity. I in no case ever kept any improper company: nevertheless, dancing was to me a perverting influence, an unmixed moral evil. It drowned the voice of a well-instructed conscience, and was the first cause of impelling me to seek my happiness in this life. And I can testify that as far as my own observations have extended, (and they have had a pretty wide range,) I have known it to produce in others the same evils that it

produced in me. I consider it, therefore, as a branch of that *worldly* education, which leads from Heaven to earth, from things spiritual to things sensual, and from God to Satan. Let them plead for it who will, I know it to be evil, and that only. They who bring up their children in this way, or send them to those schools where dancing is taught, are consecrating them to the service of Moloch. No man in his senses will dance, said Cicero, a heathen; shame on those Christians who advocate a cause by which many sons have become profligate, and many daughters have been ruined."—*Life*, vol. i, 37.

These are the words of truth and soberness,—the testimony of one who knows. The correctness of his witness is attested by the experience of a multitude of others. The dance of amusement, though cultivated in its best form, and under the most favourable circumstances, is productive of evil. Its tendency is to produce a vain, frivolous, pleasure-loving habit of mind: and whatever does this, should be reprobated by all sensible people, and should

be abandoned, too, though it fascinate and enchant the soul; though it be as dear as a right hand or a right eye.

He who "knows what is in man," who knows in what direction man's great interests lie, and whence his worst temptations come, has assured us that the house of mirth and worldly pleasure is not a desirable place. He has assured us that "it is better to go to the house of mourning than the house of feasting." What is this, but an intimation that we are so prone to forget our Maker; so prone to forget death, and the judgment that cometh after it, that whatever serves to remind us of these great realities, works for our good? It is better to go to the abode of sorrow, than to the place of mirth. The one serves to delude, the other breaks the spell. We go to the house of feasting, and listen to the merry sounds of the viol, and look upon the joyous countenances of the company, and all seems happiness. The pleasures of earth are spread around us. The sorrows of the past, the present duties of the present hour, and the dangers

of the future, are alike forgotten. A thoughtless joy fills the heart, and all serious things are shut out as unwelcome guests. A deep haze settles down upon the future, and hides it from our eyes. The light-winged hours fly on their rapid way; and we are so absorbed in the joys of the merry time, that we forget whither they are bearing us.

But change the scene. Change the house of feasting for the chamber of sorrow. Instead of the garland of roses, let the dampness of death be on the brow. Remove the cup and the banquet, and bring the pall, the coffin, and the shroud. Let the dance be exchanged for the slow and sad funeral train. Let the merry notes of the viol give place to the hollow, dreary sounds of the dirge. And all is changed, even to the thoughts of the mind, and the emotions of the soul. The gay reveller now views life from another point of observation,—one which enables him to see it more as it is. He sees that al things here are vain and fleeting. The halo of light which invested the things of

time, departs from them; and heaven and hell stand forth to view. Eternity speaks to him with the silent tongue of the dead; and conscience hears a voice in all the signs of wo, bidding him prepare to pass that "bourn whence no traveller returns."

But the chambers of mirth, the song, and the dance, also tend to unfit us for entering upon the common vocations of life with that enjoyment which prevents their becoming mere drudgery. Young man, if you imbibe a fondness for the dance, and dancing companies, it will be a remarkable case, if you retain your love of ordinary employments. If you mingle at night in the gayety and excitement of the ball, it will seem a very dull, humdrum thing, the next morning, to pore over the musty folios of law and medicine. The vexatious cases of Doe *versus* Roe will be doubly vexatious; and the barbarisms of medical Latin will seem more barbarous than ever. Still more dull and degrading will it seem to stretch yards of cloth between two brass nails, or impel a

saw, or hammer smutty iron; or, sitting down ingloriously among leather chips, to "point" a bristle "and adorn" a shoe.

Young lady, by imbibing a love for the dance, you will almost necessarily acquire a distaste for the duties of every-day life. I take it for granted that your aim is not to become a useless piece of parlour furniture, but that you design to act well your part in the world. Permit me to tell you, in all kindness, that after the rustling of ball-dresses, the sounds of music, and the glittering lights in the dancing saloon, the quiet of home will seem lifeless stagnation; and home employments will be a weight grievous to be borne. You will look down with scorn upon household implements, and call them vulgar and low. The current of thought will be turned into a new channel. Dancing, and your dancing companions, will absorb your attention; and the brief interval between one scene of soulless gayety, and another, will be given up to dreaming over the last, and planning decorations and conquests for the next one to come.

This is the experience of thousands who have loved the dance, and will, in all probability, be your experience, if you are so unwise as to suffer yourself to be drawn into the giddy whirlpool of this amusement.

3. We object to the dance, because a wanton waste of the means of doing good is a positive sin; and dancing leads to unnecessary expenditure. The dance, and the ultras of dress and fashion, are sworn companions. In most cases a marked influence will be exerted in this respect. Many will be tempted to dress above their means, and thus add dishonesty to dissipation. The young gentlemen must have finer coats, and more rakish, janty hats, than before; and the ladies will covet all the splendours of ruffles, trinkets, and feathers. And, now and then, the parental purse must yawn to pay for a new dress, to be worn at the ball, but which is too short at each end to be called modest or decent anywhere else. The teacher of dancing must be paid more liberally for instructing the toes, than he who in-

forms and cultivates the nobler powers of the mind; and the dancing-master's array of satellites, white and black, must be abundantly rewarded for useless services. And all this, while within sight of the place where the dancers congregate, children, ragged and hungry, are desiring in vain to be fed with the crumbs that fall from the tables of the rich; and the poor are sick and dying in want of the necessaries of life. And all this, too, with this aggravation of the damning sin, that these dancing gentry are frequently applied to for aid, and decline, because "their time is so much occupied, and there are really so many demands made upon their purse." Our Lord, in his description of the "great and terrible day" of judgment, pronounces sentence of everlasting fire upon those who neglect the duties of humanity, and declares that those who refuse to show mercy to the poor, refuse Him, and shall find no mercy themselves in that greater hour of need. Who, then, that has a conscience, will plunge into the round of endless expense which is insepa-

rable from the cultivation of the dance? Who dares to take the money that might feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and heal the sick, and give it to a worthless scraper of fiddles?

CHAPTER VIII.

MORE OBJECTIONS TO THE PLEASURE-DANCE.

To enumerate all the evils attendant on dancing for amusement, would be equivalent to counting the demons that dwelt in the man whose haunt was among the tombs.

4. *Balls and dancing parties frequently have a deleterious influence upon the health.*

A delicate female attends a ball. She dances, in an apartment crowded to suffocation, till she is exhausted almost to faintness. The hour of closing comes at last, and she passes, all in a perspiration, out into the chilling air of early morning. A violent cold ensues; her lungs become affected; and in a little time, her form,

beautiful even in death, is wrapped in the winding-sheet, and her weeping friends follow her to an untimely grave.

We are aware that some attempt to defend the dance, on the ground of its being a healthful exercise, extremely beneficial, especially to those who lead sedentary lives. But dancing is practised under such circumstances as subvert its efficacy as a promotive of physical well-being. Exercise, to promote health, must be taken at proper hours of the day, in a pure atmosphere, and in a dress that will admit of deep and full respiration. But all these conditions are violated by the votaries of the modern Terpsichore. They dance away the hours of midnight, and early morn, when they should be seeking balmy sleep; and they retire to rest at the very hour when they should be rising, refreshed and blooming, to the duties of the day. The air of the dancing apartment is impure and unhealthy, and the dress indispensable on such occasions prevents free respiration. Add to this the refreshments common on such occasions; and we can

hardly conceive any amusement more calculated to destroy instead of promoting health.

The law of Jehovah says, "Thou shalt not kill." This precept demands that we recognize, everywhere, the value of human life. It commands us not only to regard the lives of others, but to avoid everything which would needlessly tend to shorten our own. We infer, therefore, that balls and dancing parties are contrary to the spirit of that command which saith, "Thou shalt do no murder."

The apologists for these things may reply that the weight of the objection lies, not against the dance, but against certain incidentals connected with it, as generally practised. Even so; but what hope is there for the advocates of the dance, that they will ever be able to reform it? Physiologists decide that the colour of the African is merely accidental, resulting from climate and mode of life; but "can the Ethiopian change his skin?" We may talk of "quiet little dances," to be performed in the family circle; but it is all folly to think that we can cultivate the

art, and at the same time keep it within these narrow bounds. Where dancing is common, balls and routs, and dancing parties, with their legion of attendant evils, will be common too. And all the reform that the wildest imagination can conceive, could not exalt the dance, in point of healthfulness, to the level of the *skipping-rope*, of which children are so fond. And those who discharge conscientiously the duties which they owe to God, to their neighbour, and to themselves, will not very often be compelled, by the want of exercise, to mount this tread-mill of Satan.

5. *This absurd art is objectionable on account of the time wasted in acquiring and practising it.*

Time is more precious than the gold of Ophir, or the pearls of the sea. Our life is but a breath, and with its expiration, death and eternity, heaven and hell, come upon us. Shall we spend that brief moment in those things which blind our eyes, harden our hearts, and fill our minds with folly?

Life is short; and, to the wise of all

ages and conditions, it is crowded with duties. In youth, man finds himself standing on the shore of a boundless ocean of knowledge, and, if wise, he longs to explore its wide plains and fathom its depths. His heart is to be cultivated, as well as the mental powers, and he feels that he has much to accomplish. As he advances in years, his cares and responsibilities increase; and even in the last hours of declining age, he gathers up his fragments of time, and the remains of former energy, and devotes them to something worth the doing. And to the remonstrances of those who would bring his busy activity to an end, he replies, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" He who lives the life of an active, useful Christian, labouring earnestly in the vineyard of his Lord, praying without ceasing and in everything giving thanks, will find as little time as inclination to mingle in the fooleries of the dance.

6. *The dance of pleasure is objectionable on account of its utter inconsistency with the Christian profession.*

The reader may have remarked that, up to this point, few appeals have been made to the scruples of the truly pious. The reason is easily given. The lovers of the dance are never noted for piety; and appeals to deep Christian principle, in dancers, would be spoken to the winds. Those who have piety sufficient to save the soul of an animalcule, will not need an elaborate argument to show the evils of pleasure-dances.

Non-professors understand this very well. They never invite a minister of the gospel, or the deeply pious, to their performances. But if the dance is so extremely beneficial, and so innocent withal, why should they not? Are innocent joys intended for none but sinners? Why do the managers of these things dispense their favours so warily? The plain truth is, they have no hope of luring into their net any but those who either have no consciences to trouble their peace, or those who have not had the opportunity of settling the moral character of dancing. Let those professors of religion who receive invita-

tions to balls and routs, look upon their billets, not only as notes of ceremony, but as so many certificates, signed, sealed, and delivered, that, in the opinion of the sender, they are ignorant of their duty, or are merely nominal Christians.

Religion and modern pleasure-dances are totally inconsistent. The Christian is commanded not to be "conformed to this world." Can he obey that injunction when in a ball-room? He is exhorted, when he is "merry, to sing psalms." Will psalm-singing harmonize with the fiddlings of the dance? He is exhorted to "pray without ceasing." Can he maintain the spirit of prayer amid the sounds of revelry, and all the confused noises of the ball-room?

The giddy excitement of the dance accords not with the tremendous responsibilities of man. The dancer is immortal, even as others. In a few brief moments, he must gaze upon the New Jerusalem, or lift up his eyes in torment. God speaks from heaven, saying, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" He that was crucified

stretches out his bleeding hands, and cries, "Come unto me, and be ye saved!" Mar runs the race; and angels, and saints, and devils, crowd around him, a great cloud of witnesses. The prize lies a little way before him, and a voice of warning falls upon his ear: "Let no man take thy crown." The gates of pearl open to receive him; and hell opens its mouth in hope of another victim. Death presents his dart to bid his spirit go. But the wretched mortal, blind to his dangers, is absorbed in learning how to make a bow, and how to turn out his toes, and to step so, and so, and so. The voice of conscience, and of the eternal God himself, is lost to him in the noise of mirth and revelry, in the sound of a hair drawn across a string.

Now, let the reader look at the array of facts which stand opposed to the dance of amusement. Let him ask himself honestly, whether it be as innocent a thing as at the first superficial glance it would appear?

This array of objections might be increased ten-fold; but has not enough been ad-

duced to convince those who are willing to let reason and conscience govern?

"But there cannot be any great harm in a little dancing."

Ah! there is the syren voice that lures to death. Young man! young woman! if you value your fair fame, beware of those things which are compelled to take refuge in this suspicious plea. It is a defence which virtue never needs. Where much is destructive, a little may be dangerous. "Only a little?" The embankment of earth, so long as it is entire, can hold in its strong embrace the swelling floods of a mighty river; but let the destroyer take a little instrument and make a small opening, so as to let out only a little water;—the aperture becomes larger every moment, till a foaming torrent is roaring through the breach, and a deluge sweeps over fertile plains, and buries whole cities.

"No harm in a little," argues the cunning vender of the cup of intoxication and madness. And the victim of his arts finds his way, through poverty, dishonour, and

wretchedness, to the drunkard's abode of eternal wo.

"No harm in a quiet little game of cards," urges another; and his once conscientious listener becomes the villanous professional gambler, prowling around in search of inexperience and weakness, like a famished wolf for his prey.

"No harm," whispers the black-hearted scoundrel, with smooth and honeyed accent, in the ear of unsuspecting innocence. "No harm; the marriage ceremony is but an empty form of words; no harm in its omission for a little time." And the wretched female, dishonoured and thrown aside, becomes a broken-hearted outcast; and the gray hairs of the mother who bore her, are brought down with sorrow to the grave.

CHAPTER IX.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE WHOLE SUBJECT.

BEFORE we proceed further, permit the re petition of a remark touching the design with which this little volume has been prepared.

That which is written has not been penned to suit any particular case, but with reference to the subject in general. There has been no design to charge any particular person with having advocated what he knows to be sin. If dancers consider the question of morality at all, it is probable that they believe, or try to believe, that their favourite amusement is a harmless one. And some may even marvel that it should be opposed.

But while these things are charitably conceded, the friends of pure morality and true religion should not bate one jot or one tittle of their hostility to dances of pleasure. There is enough to demonstrate fully that these, in the language already

quoted, are "an unmixed moral evil." And our prayer for those who advocate this dangerous amusement, under the delusion that they are right in so doing, may, without irreverence, be that of the Saviour for those who crucified him—"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!"

And now, reader, if you have no conscience; if you are determined to dance, because it pleases you, and your heart is fully set in you to pursue, irrespective of the question of right, all that gratifies your passions; if you scoff at the scruples of the pious, and care neither for your own soul, nor for the souls of others, please close the book *just here*. You are not the one addressed. It would be vain either to reason or declaim, as far as you are concerned. If any two persons hold an argument of any description, they must fix upon some standard by which to decide the matter. If you will close your eyes and stop your ears; if you will not listen to the voice of God or of reason; if you are governed by blind impulse alone, all reasonings upon the subject will

be of none effect. Nothing can be done for you by any agency, save an omnipotent one.

But if you are really desirous of choosing the right way; if you have resolved to be led by reason and conscience, instead of irrational inclination, be entreated not to resist, in any degree, the conclusion to which your mind is now tending, that the pleasure-dance is foolish, dangerous, and, consequently, morally wrong.

Young man, be prevailed upon to give up these frivolous pleasures for wiser counsels and better employments; for that which is designed not only to impart exterior polish, but to refine the heart, and cultivate the nobler powers. Determine to do something in the world worth the doing; to be something worth being. Set your standard high. "Show thyself a man." Your Creator has given you an immortal soul, even as others. He has given you a capacity for sublime enjoyment. You may delve in the mines of knowledge, and grasp the rich gems and gold of truth. You may rejoice in moral excellence till

you are "changed into the same image, from glory to glory." Forget not your native greatness. Cast not yourself away. "Awake! awake! put on thy strength." "Arise, and shake thyself from the dust." Stretch out the wings which have so long been folded, and fix an unwavering gaze upon the heights of glory and of joy, to which the hand that formed thee is pointing.

Young woman, permit one who ranks your sex high in all those things which most adorn and ennoble humanity, to exhort you to lead the way in this reformation from irrational pleasures. You possess vast influence with the other sex; use that influence for good. Show those around you that you value the solid virtues of the heart, and the steady radiance of the cultivated intellect, more highly than all the momentary glitter of worthless acquirement. In your estimation, let sound principles and true nobility of soul be superior to all else. And ever remember that nothing so prepares us to become recipients and dispensers of happiness in this

life; nothing so crowns existence hereafter with gladness, as rigid conformity to the pure morals of God's holy word.

Youthful professor of religion, follower of the meek and lowly Jesus, you have done well in coming out on the Lord's side. You have "professed a good confession," and that "before many witnesses." The eyes of a whole universe are bent on you. God calls; the Holy Spirit invites; Christ entreats. Hell, with all its terrors, is behind, and heaven, with its fulness of joy, is before you. The way you tread is crimsoned with the rich drops of a Saviour's blood, shed for your redemption. A few more steps, and the race is run. A few more vigorous efforts, and heaven is gained, a crown of glory is won, and a place in the Eden of eternal rest is yours. Will you risk all this for the pleasures of a moment? Will you loose your hold upon the "hope set before you," that you may stretch after shadows that elude your grasp, and vanish ere you touch them? Will you dishonour your Christian profession, and, before many witness-

es, cover yourself with shame? Will you, for a few hours of companionship with the giddy and the vain, cause those who love you to weep over your departure from the good and right ways of the Lord? Not so. Sell not your heavenly birthright for the miserable pottage of the worldling. Be a witness for God. Despise the fascinations of Satan's devices. The approval of your own soul will, even here, yield you a rich reward. And though the wicked may deride your tenderness of conscience, yet your "witness is in heaven," and your "record on high." And when the solemn hour of your departure from earth shall come, you will bless God that he strengthened you to "break the snare of the fowler."

Perchance your professed friends may see no harm in the dances of fashion and amusement. Perhaps one to whom you are tenderly attached, may desire your company in the pleasures that he loves. This is the strongest snare, the deadliest arrow of the great enemy of your soul. If you yield, and rush into the paths which

your conscience condemns, you are lost. Can you listen one moment to such a proposal? Can you be so deluded as to believe that one who really loves you, would, knowing your scruples, desire you to violate the clear dictates of duty? Can you be so infatuated as to think him a friend who would, if possible, drag you from the arms of God, and place you in the power of the devil? Can you be so blind as to hope that he will prove the ever kind and considerate companion of your future life, who now exerts all his influence and ingenuity to sever you from the love of God, thrust you from the path of life, and bring down eternal wrath upon your head? It cannot be. Open your eyes upon the truth. The one who would make you less conscientious, loves you not. He has no rational regard for your happiness, here or hereafter. He who would, knowingly, compel you to do what you know to be wrong, will, if you place yourself in his power, be the tyrant of your future years. Soon your visions of happiness will fade into thin air, and you will say, in the bit-

terness of your soul, that you have sold yourself for naught.

Christian parent, suffer the word of exhortation. A Roman mother could style her sons her jewels; but Christianity places a value upon your offspring which heathenism knows not. It tells you that the soul of your child is a priceless gem, committed to your charge. It tells you that the eyes which, a few years ago, gazed upon the sun for the first time, shall, when that sun shall have passed away in the glory of his own beams, either gaze upon the throng of shining ones around the eternal throne, or be lifted up in torment. It tells you that the lips which, but a little while ago, first sent back an answering smile to your words of love, will, when the heavens be no more, either sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, or send forth the sounds of weeping and wailing. Will you lay your jewel in the paths of the destroyer? Will you, like a Hindoo parent, cast down your offspring to be ground to powder beneath the remorseless wheels of the great Juggernaut of fashion?

No; treasure up the gem: plunge it not into the mire of worldly folly: cast it not into the bottomless sea of dissipation. Rather raise it, with the arm of faith, and place it, flashing with immortal light, in the Redeemer's crown of rejoicing.

Your children may be taken from you in the days of their youth. Your hopes, which now bloom with so much promise, may soon be "withered all, and dead." And when those who are the light of your eyes and the joy of your heart are gone, you will look back upon the past, and ask yourself whether you acted well your part towards them. And if you neglect your bounden duty, and they die in their guilt, agonizing reflections will gnaw your heart, and bitter self-reproaches will bite with the poison tooth of the adder, and sting as doth a scorpion. You will not be able to cast from you the fact that you knew your duty and did it not. The memory of your treachery to them will never depart from you. It will rise, like the grim spectre of a murdered victim, from the graves of your loved ones, to haunt your path by day,

and your dreams by night, till the hour that you lay down your aching head in the dust, and go to meet, at the bar of God, the souls which you have helped to thrust into everlasting burnings.

But some parent may reply, "I have done what I could to prevent my sons and my daughters from imbibing a fondness for the fashionable dances, and have prevailed nothing. What can I do?"

Is it indeed true, that you have done all that you could? Have you taught them, from the first, their obligation to respect your advice and obey your command? Has the duty, thus inculcated, been based on the Rock of Ages—the word of inspiration? Have you trained up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Have you, by unwearied precept and daily example, cultivated in them habits of the strictest conscientiousness? If not, it is no marvel that they now disregard your remonstrances. And what have you done in the present case? Have you brought to bear upon them all the mighty influence of your relation to them,

your years, and the love which they bear you? Have you, with all the tenderness of a Christian, and all the weight of parental authority, remonstrated against the sin, and forbid their being partakers of it? Perhaps you have done all this in vain. If so, you have delivered your own soul.

But, perchance, you have merely said, with mild Eli, of old, "Why do ye such things?" "Nay, my sons, it is no good report that I hear." If this be the case; if you have, in a weak and wavering manner, opposed sin in your children, hear the word of the Lord:—"I will judge his house forever, for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not."*

Perhaps a hint, intended for the proprietors of those buildings in which dances are wont to be held, might not be altogether out of place. It is clearly the right of all good citizens to be protected, not

* "Because his sons made themselves *accursed*, and he *frowned not upon them*."—*Margin.*

only from theft, defamation, and personal violence, but from all gross, needless annoyances. And to a quiet neighbourhood, a dance-house, be it of high or low degree, is, in most cases, a great annoyance, and not unfrequently a positive nuisance. The ear of night is tortured with unseasonable and unseemly sounds. The dancing-hall is the rendezvous of dissipation, and thither the tribes of noise and revelry go up. And the hours which nature has devoted to stillness, are vexed with the screak of fiddles, the agonizing groans of the violoncello, and a trampling as of many mules driven over a bridge.

Now this might possibly be borne with, were it of any use, either earthly or heavenly. But it is all a free-will offering at the shrine of folly. The proprietor of the house in which these things are done, may indeed receive a few dollars; and the public houses in the neighbourhood may obtain some additional patronage. But these paltry gains are the sum for which is sold the rest of the tired artisan, and the

wearied student, and the female worn down, and faint with watching. And, worst of all, these inconsiderable gains are not unfrequently the price of the repose of the sick, and of the quiet of the last hours of the dying.

READER, whoever you are, whatever you are, act wisely in this matter. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

A great artist once said, in the enthusiasm of his soul, "I paint for eternity." You are doing the same. And you are painting your own portrait. And it rests with you to determine whether your form shall be like the Son of God, or whether your lineaments shall assimilate to those of devils. Endanger not your eternal welfare needlessly. You cannot deem dancing obligatory, whether it be allowable or not. Then take the course which all admit to

be safe. And remember the saying of the Hebrew sage:—"A PRUDENT MAN FORESEETH THE EVIL, AND HIDETH HIMSELF: BUT THE SIMPLE PASS ON AND ARE PUNISHED.'

THE END.

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